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Media contact: Rebecca Dreilinger 202-225-8203

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Washington D.C.) - In response to charges made against Vice President Cheney, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez has made the following statement:

"Over the past several months, I have been overwhelmed by calls and letters from my constituents who are outraged over allegations of abuse of power by Vice President Dick Cheney. In an effort to respond to their concerns, I have joined my colleagues on the House Judiciary Committee in calling for committee hearings on impeachment."

The following op-ed was issued this December:

On November 7, the House of Representatives voted to send a resolution of impeachment of Vice President Cheney to the Judiciary Committee. As Members of the House Judiciary Committee, we strongly believe these important hearings should begin.

The issues at hand are too serious to ignore, including credible allegations of abuse of power that if proven may well constitute high crimes and misdemeanors under our constitution. The charges against Vice President Cheney relate to his deceptive actions leading up to the Iraq war, the revelation of the identity of a covert agent for political retaliation, and the illegal wiretapping of American citizens.

Now that former White House press secretary Scott McClellan has indicated that the Vice President and his staff purposefully gave him false information about the outing of Valerie Plame Wilson as a covert agent to report to the American people, it is even more important for Congress to investigate what may have been an intentional obstruction of justice. Congress should call Mr. McClellan to testify about what he described as being asked to “unknowingly [pass] along false information.” In addition, recent revelations have shown that the Administration including Vice President Cheney may have again manipulated and exaggerated evidence about weapons of mass destruction -- this time about Iran’s nuclear capabilities.

Some of us were in Congress during the impeachment hearings of President Clinton. We spent a year and a half listening to testimony about President Clinton’s personal relations. This must not be the model for impeachment inquiries. A Democratic Congress can show that it takes its constitutional authority seriously and hold a sober investigation, which will stand in stark contrast to the kangaroo court convened by Republicans for President Clinton. In fact, the worst legacy of the Clinton impeachment – where the GOP pursued trumped up and insignificant allegations - would be that it discourages future Congresses from examining credible and significant allegations of a constitutional nature when they arise.

The charges against Vice President Cheney are not personal. They go to the core of the actions of this Administration, and deserve consideration in a way the Clinton scandal never did. The American people understand this, and a majority support hearings according to a November 13 poll by the American Research Group. In fact, 70% of voters say that Vice President Cheney has abused his powers and 43% say that he should be removed from office right now. The American people understand the magnitude of what has been done and what is at stake if we fail to act. It is time for Congress to catch up.

Some people argue that the Judiciary Committee cannot proceed with impeachment hearings because it would distract Congress from passing important legislative initiatives. We disagree. First, hearings need not tie up Congress for a year and shut down the nation. Second, hearings will not prevent Congress from completing its other business. These hearings involve the possible impeachment of the Vice President – not our commander in chief – and the resulting impact on the nation’s business and attention would be significantly less than the Clinton Presidential impeachment hearings. Also, despite the fact that President Bush has thwarted moderate Democratic policies that are supported by a vast majority of Americans -- including children’s health care, stem cell research, and bringing our troops home from Iraq -- the Democratic Congress has already managed to deliver a minimum wage hike, and assistance for college tuition, among other legislative successes. We can continue to deliver on more of our agenda in the coming year while simultaneously fulfilling our constitutional duty by investigating

and publicly revealing whether or not Vice President Cheney has committed high crimes and misdemeanors.

Holding hearings would put the evidence on the table, and the evidence – not politics – should determine the outcome. Even if the hearings do not lead to removal from office, putting these grievous abuses on the record is important for the sake of history. For an Administration that has consistently skirted the constitution and asserted that it is above the law, it is imperative for Congress to make clear that we do not accept this dangerous precedent. Our Founding Fathers provided Congress the power of impeachment for just this reason, and we must now at least consider using it.

Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL)

Rep. Robert Wexler (D-FL)

Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

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